

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9278

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

ALL USCONS MEXICO POUCH

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DEPT FOR ARA LABOR ADVISOR

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CI, MX

SUBJECT: LABOR APPREHENSIONS ABOUT POLITICAL REFORM

REF: 1977 MEXICO A-210 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: AS PRI HEADS PROCEED ENTHUSIASTICALLY WITH THEIR COMMENDABLE PLANS FOR POLITICAL REFORM, GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP AND THE YOUNG PROFESSIONAL CORPS OF PRI SUPPORTING ORGANIZED LABOR APPEAR TO BE TRYING TO WARN THEIR TOP LEADERS THAT THERE IS A CLEAR DANGER THAT THESE EFFORTS MIGHT RESULT IN A CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF WORKER BALLOT BOX SUPPORT. THERE ARE GROWING INDICATIONS THAT MANY FEAR THAT THEY CANNOT INSURE THE HISTORICALLY HIGH DEGREE OF SUPPORT THE WORKERS HAVE GIVEN THE PRI, ONCE THEY HAVE AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THE LEFT OF THE PRI AVAILABLE IN THE SECRECY OF THE BALLOTING BOOTH. TOP LEADERSHIP TO DATE HAVE IGNORED THE WARNING AND FORCEFULLY REJECTED

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EFFORTS TO MAKE PUBLIC THEIR CONCERN, BUT THE RESPECTED HEAD OF THE JALISCO CTM (GUADALAJARA) RECENTLY ISSUED A STRONG IN-HOUSE WARNING THAT HIS ORGANIZATION WILL DEAL HARSHLY WITH ANY DISSIDENCE PRODUCED BY POLITICAL REFORM.

END SUMMARY.

2. TOWARD THE END OF 1977 THERE BEGAN TO SURFACE FROM

AMONG THE RANKS OF PRI LABOR INDICATIONS OF CONCERN OVER THEIR PARTY'S PLAN FOR POLITICAL REFORM. SECONDARY LEADERSHIP (ALL LEADERS ARE SECONDARY OR LOWER AS COMPARED TO CTM GENERAL SECRETARY FIDEL VELASQUEZ) BEGAN TO MAKE MENTION OF THEIR RESERVATIONS TO THE PLAN IN CASUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LABATT. MANY, HARASSED BY LOWER LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE ACCEPTANCE OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO'S UNPOPULAR WAGE RESTRAINT POLICY, EXPRESSED OUTRIGHT OPPOSITION TO THE PLAN. THERE SEEMS TO BE GROWING CONCERN ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO MAINTAIN THEIR RECORD OF WORKER SUPPORT FOR THE PRI IF ALTERNATIVES TO THE LEFT OF THEIR PARTY ARE GIVEN LEGAL SANCTION.

3. IN DECEMBER 1977 A SMALL GROUP OF LABOR PROFESSIONALS (PRIMARILY LAWYERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE AIDES EMPLOYED BY THE CTM AND CONGRESS OF LABOR) INFORMALLY PRESENTED THEIR VIEWS TO THE HIERARCHY OF THE CTM. ACCORDING TO ACCOUNTS OF SEVERAL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SESSION, FIDEL VELASQUEZ POLITELY BUT FIRMLY TOLD THEM TO HOLD THEIR FIRE AND KEEP THEIR OPINIONS PRIVATE. THE THRUST OF THEIR ARGUMENT WAS THAT REFORM WAS DEMOCRATICALLY COMMENDABLE BUT FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW UNDESIRABLE. IT WAS ALSO UNTIMELY CONSIDERING THE PRESENT DIFFICULTIES LABOR IS HAVING IN SUBDUING DISSATISFACTION WITH GOM ECONOMIC POLICY AS IT AFFECTS LABOR. THEY ARGUED THAT PRI LABOR HAD SUCCESSFULLY SUPRESSED PARTY REBELS IN THE PAST THROUGH ITS USE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CLOSED-SHOP PROVISIONS (WHICH REQUIRE EMPLOYERS TO DISMISS WORKERS WHO ARE EXPELLED FROM THE UNION) BUT THAT THOSE WHO REBELLED IN THE SECRECY OF THE VOTING BOOTH COULD NEITHER BE IDENTIFIED OR DISCIPLINED.

4. DURING THE FEBRUARY 1978 MEETING OF THE CTM'S NATIONAL AND STATE LEADERS (BIANNUAL "CONVOCATORIA") SOME OF THE SAME CONCERNS SURFACED FROM THE FLOOR BUT WERE LARGELY IGNORED BY THE CHAIR. NO SERIOUS DEBATE OF THE ISSUE WAS PERMITTED. THE WELL-RESPECTED GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE JALISCO (GUADALAJARA) CTM LED ONE EFFORT BUT ABANDONED IT AFTER A POLITE RAP ON THE KNUCKLES FROM VELASQUEZ. THE LATTER EFFECTIVELY TABLED FURTHER ACTION ON THE ISSUE WHEN HE OFFERED A LUKEWARM SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL REFORM IN HIS FINAL REMARKS, OPINING THAT REFORM WOULD EVENTUALLY STRENGTHEN LABOR AND THE PRI.

5. LABOR OPPOSITION TO POLITICAL REFORM LAY DORMANT UNTIL THE WEEK OF MARCH 20 WHEN THE MOST POWERFUL OF CTM STATE HEADS, JALISCO'S HELIODORO HERNANDEZ LOZA, ISSUED A PRIVATE BUT OFFICIAL REMINDER TO ALL HIS AFFILIATES THAT HIS FEDERATION WOULD "BROOK NO NONSENSE." IN A SENSE HIS MESSAGE IS DIRECTED NOT AGAINST POLITICAL REFORM DIRECTLY BUT IS A THREAT TO THOSE WHO WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT.

HE STATED THAT THE CTM UNIT THAT HE HEADS SHOULD WORK "TO AVOID ANY SUCCESS OF THE NEW PARTIES WHICH WILL EMERGE AS A RESULT OF POLITICAL REFORM." THE CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM ENTITLED "OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP", AS REPORTED BY THE OPPOSITION WEEKLY "PROCESO" MARCH 27, SAYS THAT "MEMBERS MUST REMAIN AFFILIATED TO THE PRI, WHICH BELONGS TO THE UNION AND SUPPORTS A PROGRAM TO PROTECT THE PROLETARIAT." IT FURTHER REMINDS DISSIDENTS THAT THOSE WHO LEAVE THE PARTY OR TRY TO "INTERFERE WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING", OR WHO AFFILIATE TO

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OTHER PARTIES OR UNIONS, WILL BE "SEPARATED FROM THEIR EMPLOYMENT."

6. COMMENT: WHILE THE HERNANDEZ MANIFESTO IS CERTAINLY NOTHING NEW TO LABOR OR MEXICO, IT IS ONE OF THE FEW OCCASIONS WHEN IT HAS BEEN STATED FOR THE RECORD. THE SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION OF PRESSURES OF THIS KIND HAS BEEN THE KEY TO PRI UNION "SOLIDARITY" AND LABOR VOTE SUPPORT OF THE PARTY. THAT HE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO REMIND AFFILIATES OF ITS EXISTENCE IS BY ITSELF AN INDICATION OF HIGH LABOR CONCERN OVER POLITICAL REFORM, WHICH IT BELIEVES COULD RESULT, UNLESS COUNTERED, IN MEMBERSHIP DEFECTION TO THE POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE FAR LEFT, WHICH HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT RAIDS ON PRI LABOR RANKS WOULD BE ONE OF THEIR TACTICS.

7. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT AS TO WHAT DEGREE ORGANIZED WORKERS SUPPORT THE GOVERNING PRI. CLEAR INDICATIONS

EXIST IN PAST ELECTION RETURNS. THERE HAS BEEN SOME DOUBT
AND CONTROVERSY AS TO WHY. WHAT PORTION PLACE THE "X"
BESIDE PRI CANDIDATES OUT OF TRUE LOYALTY AND APPRECI-
ATION TO THE PARTY? HOW MANY ARE TO SOME EXTENT DIS-
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SATISFIED WITH PRI PERFORMANCE BUT GIVE IT A VOTE BECAUSE
THERE IS NO ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO THE LEFT, WHERE
WORKERS WOULD NORMALLY TEND TO DRIFT IF NOT SATISFIED?
THESE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS WHICH THOSE LEADERS LESS
ISOLATED FROM THEIR MEMBERS ARE ASKING AND TRYING TO
ANSWER FOR THEIR SUPERIORS. SO FAR THOSE AT THE TOP OF
THEIR ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOT DOING MUCH LISTENING; NOR DO
THE NON-LABOR PROS OF THE PRI APPEAR TO BE. INCREASING
THE DEGREE OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN THE MEXICAN
POLITICAL SYSTEM MIGHT APPEAR TO BE COMMENDABLE FROM AN
OUTSIDE VANTAGE POINT, BUT MUCH OF THE BASE LEADERSHIP OF
MEXICAN LABOR IS TRYING TO WARN THE GUARDIANS OF THE
REVOLUTION THAT THEY ARE CREATING A MONSTER WITH THE
TALENT AND INTENTION OF FEEDING ON ITS INVENTOR. LUCEY

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